



# Once Upon A Time



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## Chapter 1 by Lex

A small girl stood above the adoring villagers, questioning herself and her ability to contain their emotions. "What will they do?" she thought "If they knew i wasn't their rightful leader"

## Chapter 2 by R



The way things had unfolded, the path this had all taken, maybe they would understand.

No. That would be ridiculous. No one could understand a thing.

She stared down at her brother - foster brother, but brother nonetheless - and she knew full well this was his spot. He was the one who deserved to be up here, not her.

This was her last slot to leave. Her last way out.

She stepped forward to the podium, hands shaking. Who was she kidding? There was no way out.

## Chapter 3 by Windlion



"People of Arinn!"

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Her speech was soft and calm, each word. Other than her voice, there were no other sounds. As they listened, enraptured by this beautiful child who would be their Queen.

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"Good people -- good friends, I ..."

She gathered herself. *It is a beautiful day*, she thought, *the roses have never looked better -- and I will never stand at this podium again, so I must honor my family by doing the best that I can.*

"I am not the person who should lead you. I, I know that, since I am his only living descendant by blood, my father wished it so, but ... " she looked toward her brother "... if not by blood, Teller is still of our family as well, and the Law is clear. I may not rule if there is a man who has claim to the title."

"NO!" The first vehement response startled her. Then "NO!" again from someone else, then several at once, and then everyone was shouting "NO!"

"ALYSIA!" "CHANGE THE LAW!" "NO!" "QUEEN ALYSIA!" "QUEEN ALYSIA!"

As the the wave of angry voices multiplied and echoed off the walls of the plaza, she in turn grew upset and then angry at them.

"People of Arinn! My people! Please! Please, if this is difficult for you, know that it is --" but her voice could hardly be heard.

"CHANGE THE LAW! CHANGE THE LAW!" "ALYSIA!" "ALYSIA!" "ALYSIA!" "QUEEN ALYSIA!" "QUEEN ALYSIA!"

The angry villagers surged forward against the low fence surrounding the dais.

She glanced at Teller -- *please, dear brother, speak to the people from your heart* -- but her brother's attention was elsewhere. He was signaling to the Captain of the Guard, and leaning over to speak in the man's ear while gesturing at the rioting villagers ... but the Captain jerked away, stepped back, stared at him and shook his head forcefully just once before turning away and marching stiff-legged toward the dais.

Teller angrily shouted something, but she did not hear him. She looked back briefly and sneer before he climbed the steps to the dais and knelt at her feet.

"Forgive me, my lady Ariel, I cannot. I will not give him the medal that her father had given him off his shoulder, I knelt at her feet and laid it there."

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"Oh, Captain! What --" He interrupted her. "Captain no more, my lady. My name is Eldred."

"El-Eldred? Why? Why? What did Teller say to you? You have always been a faithful and unflinching protector of our family -- this is a harsh blow to me, Ca -- Eldred, a harsh blow on a hard day!"

His face burned with shame at her rebuke -- but he stood, bowed, and turned away.

And as all of the Guard followed his example, adding their medals in a pile at her feet, the crowd's shouting grew mixed with cheers, and then with more threatening voices. "Teller, speak to them!" she cried -- but Teller was nowhere to be seen.

"Will you go back to the palace with us, my lady?"

She spun around to face her former Captain. "I will NOT! These are my people, and I will not leave them in this terrible hour!"

Then she turned back to face the rioters, and he understood how terribly wrong he had been not to trust in her.

Alysia stood on the dais facing her people, tears streaming down her face.

#### Chapter 4 by Windlion



The fury and rage of the crowd grew even greater. Someone shouted that her brother was illegitimate, another that he was in the pay of the Reinhardins, another that she was ensorcelled ... she closed her eyes as they pushed toward her. *Let it be swift, she prayed, and let it bring them peace*

but all of the noise faded suddenly into murmuring. Behind her, she heard the sounds of many heavy feet ... and then, a soft rustling that she dared to think she knew well

and opened her eyes to see that it was so, all of her people were on their knees bowing to her, but with their faces avoiding her

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She turned -- and there was a reserve guard, and all of the neighborhood watch, a reserve guard, and all of

"My Queen, a boon?"

"Ask what you will -- Eldreth."

"We ask forgiveness for our lack of faith. We will honor whatever you command and follow wherever you lead -- and we beg you to restore your favor on us as if this morning had never happened."

"Good El -- Good Captain ... I...."

"Good Captain, you ask nothing that is hard for me to do, because it is in my heart also. Let it be as we all wish -- is there aught?"

"Only one matter, my Queen, we beg that you speak no more of yielding to your brother. He took a horse this morn from the Royal stables and raced out the west gate, shouting that he would return with his Reinhardin allies to subdue our unruliness."

So. She had hoped it would not come to this, that yielding the throne to Teller would draw him away from the venomous fellows. It was perhaps a childish hope, and she was suddenly no longer a child.

"As my brother has chosen his own way," she spoke softly, "let him be held in the darkest regard. He has despoiled the trust we placed in him, and plots to deliver us to our enemies."

"Let him be killed without hesitation or challenge should he ever be found on our lands again."

"And my people, whether you can ever forgive me, know that I forgive you, and beg you not to hide your gaze from mine" ... the tears were back, but the smile on her face came from a hard and fearless part of her soul, "and I call on all of you to rise up, and to prepare for war against these invaders!"

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